FBI Brass Face Quiz On Threats to Dr. King

New York Post 11/19/75

WASHINGTON (AP) — High-ranking FBI officials were called to testify today before the Senate Intelligence Committee about evidence detailing a six-year campaign to destroy the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as a leader of the civil rights movement.

The evidence, released yesterday by the committee, disclosed a blackmail attempt which King interpreted as a suggestion that he kill himself shortly before he was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and an effort to find and promote a replacement for King as a "national Negro leader."

One document raised the possibility that the FBI was responsible for King's checking into the Memphis motel where he was assassinated in 1968.

Members of the committee reacted with outrage to the disclosures, with Sen. Walter Mondale (D-Minn.) calling it a historic revelation of widespread, illegal conduct by the nation's chief law enforcement agency.

'Utterly Appalling'

In Chicago, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, head of Operation PUSH-People United to Save Humanity—termed a threatening FBI letter to King in the alleged blackmail attempt "utterly appalling and in conflict with every American idea and principle of democraic government."

He also charged last night that it was further proof that the civil rights leader was killed by government agents.

In a statement, Jackson termed the letter "just one more in a series of concrete revelations which reconfirm and give credence to our and others' belief that the FBI and CIA were involved in the assassination of Dr. King, President John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X."

The FBI campaign against King was outlined to the Senate Intelligence Committee at a day-long hearing yesterday by Frederick A. O. Schwarz 3d, the committee's chief counsel, and Curtis R. Smothers, the minority counsel.

Thirty-four days before King was to receive the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, his wife received an anonymous letter sent by the FBI and accompanied by a tape picked up by one of the bureau's bugs, Schwarz said.

The letter read in part, "King, there is only thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do [it]. You are done. There is but one way out for you."

Staff members refused to describe the contents of the tape exccept to say that it contained material embarrassing to King. Smothers said the idea behind the letter was that the FBI had enough material to discredit King should he accept the Nobel prize.

According to Mondale, King interpreted the letter to be a suggestion that he commit suicide.

Death Site Link?

A March 1968 memo whose stated purpose was "to publicize hypocrisy on the part of Martin Luther King" raised the possibility that the FBI may have been instrumental in King's checking into the Lorraine motel in Memphis, Tenn., where he was shot and killed on April 4, 1968.

That memo, which a staff lawyer said bore a notation indicating that Hoover had approved it, recommended furnishing "a cooperative news media source" with the information that King, while urging a boycott of white merchants, was staying in a white-owned motel despite the fact that "there is a first class Negro hotel in Memphis, the Hotel Lorraine."

A staff lawyer said there is no evidence other than Hoover's notation that the scheme had been put into operation but he noted that newspaper stories to that effec appeared at the time. According to the staff lawyer, King went to Atlanta for the weekend and when he returned to Memphis checked into the Lorraine.

Smothers read from FBI memos in which he said the bureau outlined its objective of taking King "off his pedestal and reducing him completely in influence." The bureau earmarked a man of its own choosing, a person who was not a civil rights leader, to take King's place as "a new national Negro leader."

Schartz and Smothers declined to identify the person concerned, saying that he asked to remain anonymous. That person was asked whether he had ever been told by the FBI of the role it was proposed he play and was "shocked and astonished" when committee staff members relayed the information to him, Smothers said.

According to the committee lawyers, the FBI cam-

Continued on Page 30

Continued from Page 5

paign against King also included an unsuccessful 1964 effort to prevent King from meeting Pope Paul VI; a warning to then-New York Gov. Rockefeller not to meet with King, and an attempt to convince a major university which had awarded an honorary degree to then-FBI Director Hoover not to make a similar presentation to King.

Schwarz and Smothers told the committee the campaign began with a January 1962 memo in which Hoover concluded that King was "no good." The campaign escalated sharply after the August 1963 civil rights march on Washington despite a determination by agents just prior to the march that the Communist party had "failed dismally" in its efforts to infiltrate the movement lead by King, the lawyers said.

Hoover Memo

The finding that Communists had failed to infiltrate the civil rights movement was rejected by Hoover with the notation, "Timew ill only prove you're wrong," according to a series of memos read by the staff.

Several days after the march, William C. Sullivan, chief of the FBI domestic intelligence division, responded with a note that read "the director is correct . . . We regret greatly the memo did not measue up to the standards that the director had every right to expect."

Another memo followed, decommending increased coverage of Communist influ-

NEW YORK POST, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1975

ence in the civil rights movement, to which Hoover responded, "I can't understand how you can so agilely switch your thinking."

Ten days after that an unofficial memo written by Sullivan stated "it is obvious to us now we did not put the proper interpretation on the facts . . . We regard Martin Luther King to be the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country."

That memo was followed by a December 1963 meeting at which bureau officials discussed a total of 21 different tactics for dealing with King, including "the possibility of placing a good looking female plant in King's office," staff lawyers said.

One month later, the first of 16 electronic bugs and eight wiretaps on King was installed, according to the lawyers.